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(*b*) if so, what action he has taken on the various grievances outlined therein ?

A.—(*a*) No.
(*b*) The question does not arise.

Medical.

Alleged refusal of admission into the General Hospital.

* 1489-A Q.—Mr. P. ANJANEYULU : Will the hon. the Minister for Local Self-Government be pleased to state—

(*a*) whether the attention of the Government is drawn to the publication in the correspondence columns of the *Swarajya* dated 13th February 1926 under the heading " A student's tragic death " ;

(*b*) whether Government have verified if the statements made therein regarding the admission into the General Hospital which was refused to the patient, Mr. Gopalasundaram, a Law College student, though he waited from 8–30 a.m. to 12–30 p.m. ;

(*c*) whether Government have also verified if the doctor in the Rayapuram Hospital refused admission in the beginning on various grounds " the more important of which were that it was late for admission, that the patient was not in so serious a condition as to necessitate immediate admission, that . . . he happened to be a Brahman " ;

(*d*) if the answers to (*b*) and (*c*) be in the negative, whether the Government will be pleased to make immediate enquiries into the matter ; and

(*e*) if the answers be in the affirmative, what action Government have taken or propose to take in the matter ?

A.—(*a*) Yes.
(*b*), (*c*) & (*d*) The Government have obtained a report [a] in the matter from the Surgeon-General, which is laid on the table.
(*e*) As pointed out by the Surgeon-General, the incident was due not to any defect of system, but to an error of judgment on the part of the medical officer on duty. The Government do not therefore propose to take any special action in the matter. The Surgeon-General will deal with the assistant surgeon departmentally.

Mr. S. SATYAMURTI :—" May I ask the hon. the Minister, first, why the Government have not expressed even the conventional regret for the death of a student, due to an error of judgment on the part of one of their subordinates, as has been admitted in the answer to the question ? "

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL :—" The Surgeon-General in his report has expressed regret, and that letter has been placed on the table of the House."

Mr. S. SATYAMURTI :—" With reference to clause (*e*) of this question, we find that, as pointed out by the Surgeon-General, the incident was due not to any defect in the system, but to an error of judgment on the part of the

[a] Vide Appendix II on page 90 infra.

medical officer on duty. But if we turn to paragraph 3 of the copy of the letter of the Surgeon-General, dated 25th February 1926, we find this: 'Between 9-30 and 11 a.m. the Duty Assistant Surgeon, Mr. K. I. John, whose duty it is to admit the patients into the hospital, saw all the patients who were earmarked for admission and selected the nine cases which he considered were seriously ill and refused admission to the others for want of vacant beds'. May I ask the hon. Minister whether he considers that the want of vacant beds for refusing admission of a case like this is not a defect of the system, and how he thinks it is an error of judgment on the part of the officer on duty?"

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL:—"Sir, there is only room for a certain number of patients, and the officer in charge has to select the most deserving cases for admission. He thought that the nine cases he selected were the more deserving cases; and he could not therefore admit the other cases."

Mr. S. SATYAMURTI:—"No, Sir; I am afraid my question has been missed. In view of the sequel, which is the death of this patient, in view of the letter of Dr. Krishna Rao, a medical practitioner recommending that it was a very serious case, and in view of the fact that if there were beds this case would have been admitted, may I ask whether the non-admission of patients for want of beds in a city like Madras, even in serious cases which may end in death and of which only nine were admitted, is not due to a defect of the system?"

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL:—"I believe my hon. Friend assumes that all the nine patients died. But I do not think that all of them died. If the officer in charge knew that the case in question was as serious as it really happened to be, he would certainly have preferred this patient to another patient who perhaps might have been refused admission or he might have made special arrangements to admit him as an emergent patient."

Mr. S. SATYAMURTI:—"May I ask the hon. the Minister, in view of this answer, whether there is any gradation of illness among serious illnesses, and whether the assistant surgeon in charge has to grade the serious illnesses, not according to their seriousness, but according to the number of beds available in the hospital, and if so, could not the system be improved with a view to providing accommodation for all cases which are serious and which may end as seriously as this case did?"

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL:—"Sir, I am afraid it amounts to a suggestion for action."

Mr. S. SATYAMURTI:—"Assuming it is, Sir, may I not, as regards the death of an Indian patient in an Indian hospital, suggest to the hon. Gentleman to take some action?"

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL:—"Well, what is the action that the hon. Minister can take in the matter? The student died and I feel sorry for his death as I feel sorry for the death of ever so many other patients, but it is impossible for any Government to prevent deaths. It is not possible to make provision for all cases to be admitted in the General Hospital."

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Mr. S. SATYAMURTI :—" With regard to the capacity of any succeeding Government, I would not ask the hon. the Minister to anticipate; but may I know whether he would not take any steps to increase these nine beds to 12 beds or 24 beds, when a case like that has come to his notice, or does he want more deaths to occur before he is going to change this system ?"

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL :—" The extension of accommodation would depend on the availability of funds."

Mr. C. V. VENKATARAMANA AYYANGAR :—" May I know in view of the statement in paragraph 5 of the Surgeon-General's letter how many European and Indian beds were vacant that day ? It is stated that there were 5 vacant Indian beds. May I know if there were vacant that day any European beds, reserved for European patients ? "

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL :—" I should like to have notice of that question."

Mr. C. V. VENKATARAMANA AYYANGAR :—" I want to know this Sir, because in paragraph 3 it is stated that admission was refused 'for want of vacant beds', but in paragraph 5 that statement is qualified by the words 'Indian beds'. May I therefore take it that paragraph 3 is correct only when qualified by paragraph 5 ? May I know whether . . ."

The hon. the PRESIDENT :—" Vacant beds mean Indian beds and not European beds."

Mr. C. V. VENKATARAMANA AYYANGAR :—" May I know also whether in such cases any European beds can be occupied by Indian patients ? "

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL :—" I think I have already answered that question. Whether there were European beds vacant or not, I cannot say without notice."

Mr. C. V. VENKATARAMANA AYYANGAR :—" May I know whether Indian patients in serious cases can, under the rules, be given European beds if they are vacant ? "

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL :—" If there is any case which is considered to be of such a serious nature, I am sure the officer in charge will find room to admit the patient."

Mr. C. V. VENKATARAMANA AYYANGAR :—" Apart from the hon. Minister's opinion or assurance, I want to know whether the rule is that European beds can be occupied by Indian patients."

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL :—" All I can say is that there is no rule to refuse admission of an emergent case. "

Rai Bahadur T. M. NARASIMHACHARLU :—" Paragraph 3 of the letter says that nine cases were admitted. Paragraph 5 says that seven cases were admitted. May I request the hon. the Minister to let me know how he reconciles these two statements ? "

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL :—" Sir, according to paragraph 3, nine cases were *selected*."

Rai Bahadur T. M. NARASIMHACHARLU :—" I wish to know the meaning of these two words 'admission' and 'selection' of cases. What became of the other two ? "

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The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL :—" Selection refers to the preliminary stage of deciding the number and personnel of patients to be admitted. Admission means receiving the patients into the hospital."

Rai Bahadur T. M. NARASIMHACHARLU :—" May I know what is meant by saying that there were five vacant Indian beds and that seven cases were admitted? If there are five beds, how can seven be admitted?"

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL :—" They must have made special arrangements for the admission of those two patients."

Rai Bahadur T. M. NARASIMHACHARLU :—" I wish to know whether the hospital authorities are so vacant in mind or brains . . ."

The hon. the PRESIDENT :—" Order, order. The hon. Member must really frame his questions in language that could not be considered offensive to anybody, especially to those that are outside the Council."

Rai Bahadur T. M. NARASIMHACHARLU :—" May I know whether the hospital authorities could not improvise temporary beds for such serious cases? Is there any provision in the hospital rules to improvise emergent beds for such emergent cases?"

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL :—" That depends upon the opinion of the admitting officer. If he thought that the case was sufficiently serious he would have made arrangements for admitting that particular case. But in this case on account of an error in judgment the officer in charge thought that the case was not serious enough."

Mr. C. RAMALINGA REDDI :—" Has the duty assistant surgeon explained why be overlooked the recommendation of a practitioner of the standing of Dr. Khrishna Rao?"

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL :—" That is a matter of judgment. After examining the patient, he came to the conclusion that it was not a case sufficiently serious to be admitted under the circumstances."

Mr. C. RAMALINGA REDDI :—" Will the hon. the Minister kindly place on the table a report of the action which the Surgeon-General takes in this matter?"

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL :—" The Surgeon-General has not yet taken action, but he proposes to take action departmentally."

Mr. C. RAMALINGA REDDI :—" May we have a report of that placed on the table if and when he does take action?"

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL :—" Yes. I have no objection to place it on the table."

Mr. SAMI VENKATACHALAM CHETTIYAR :—" It has been stated in the letter that Indian beds were vacant. May I know the other kinds of beds that are vacant?"

The hon. the PRESIDENT :—" Obviously European beds."

The hon. the RAJA OF PANAGAL :—" There are special beds. There are European beds and so forth."

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Mr. Sami Venkatachalam Chettiyar :—" Could not this unfortunate man be put in some special or European bed in view of the seriousness of the situation ? "

The hon. the Raja of Panagal :—" I have already answered that question. If the admitting officer thought that the case was serious enough he would have admitted the patient, he would have put him in a special bed or in a bed improvised for the occasion."

11-30 a.m. Diwan Bahadur P. C. Ethirajulu Nayudu :—" Is it a fact, Sir, that no two doctors agree in their opinion ? "

The hon. the President :—" It is hardly a question within the cognizance of the hon. Minister."

Mr. S. Satyamurti :—" With reference to paragraph 8, Sir, of the letter of the Surgeon-General this is what he says :

'It becomes practically a daily experience of shroffing out those patients who should be admitted and those who could afford to wait and come again another day. It is possible that such accidents will occasionally happen even if the greatest care be exercised.'

" I want to ask the hon. the Minister for Local Self-Government, Sir, in view of his answers to-day on the floor of the House whether there is any evidence in this case that the Assistant Surgeon in charge refused to admit the patient on the ground that the Surgeon-General advanced, with which I cordially agree, viz., that it becomes sometimes necessary to refuse admission to those who can afford to wait to come again another day. The Surgeon-General expressed no opinion that he thought that this unfortunate student could wait and come another day. Is it simply a reason of 'no bed'? "

The hon. the Raja of Panagal :—" I cannot add anything more to what I have already stated."

Mr. S. Satyamurti :—" In view of that answer, may I ask the hon. Minister to say why the Government say in answer to clause (*e*) of this question : 'The Government therefore do not propose to take any special action in the matter. The Surgeon-General will deal with the Assistant Surgeon departmentally.' Assuming that it is due to want of beds, I want to know why the Government say that they won't take any action to prevent such unhappy incidents in future."

The hon. the Raja of Panagal :—" The Surgeon-General considers that it was only a case of error in judgment and has informed that he would take action against the Assistant Surgeon departmentally. That is the reason why the Government do not propose to take further action "

Mr. S. Satyamurti :—" May I ask whether the Government do not therefore propose to increase the number of beds to prevent such unhappy incidents in future ? "

The hon. the Raja of Panagal :—" The question of reconstructing the General Hospital is engaging the attention of the Government. If funds are available, more accommodations will be provided in the new hospital."